



MEDIA RELEASE

VERY LARGE AIRTANKER ARRIVES IN VICTORIA

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The first very large airtanker to be based in Australia over a bushfire season arrived at Avalon airport yesterday. Victorian Premier John Brumby welcomed the aircraft, stating that Victoria would be the first Australian state to trial the effectiveness of the large waterbombing plane in the firefighting effort.

Leased by the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) and funded by the Victorian State Government, the DC-10 will be the largest vehicle ever to be used in aerial firefighting in Australia. The airtanker has the capacity to drop approximately 44,000 litres of water or fire retardant.

NAFC General Manager Richard Alder explained "NAFC and its Member States and Territories have been following the development of Very Large Airtankers since they were first mooted, sending people overseas to examine their operation in detail."

Based in Victoria at Avalon airport for a minimum service period of ten weeks, the VLAT will be rigorously trialed for capability. During the trial the aircraft will be used in actual fire fighting, provided it is safe and appropriate to the particular situation.

Emergency Services Minister Bob Cameron joined the Premier and plane crew and Department of Sustainability and Environment and Country Fire Authority chiefs on a tour of the vehicle.

"Firefighting aircraft are one of our key weapons against bushfires. They can drop large amounts of water, suppressant foam and fire retardant to help control fires in hard-to-reach locations", Mr Cameron explained.

Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland welcomed the Victorian trial.

"The Rudd Government is pleased to support Australia's first trial of the very large aircraft, with the National Aerial Firefighting Centre to contribute \$500,000 towards the review of its effectiveness in fighting fires in Australian terrain," Mr McClelland said.